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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 2548
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 3604

C O N F I D E N T I A L TIRANA 000790

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/SCE; G/TIP; DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/09/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KWMN](#) [KTIP](#) [SOCI](#) [SMIG](#) [PREL](#) [ELAB](#) [AL](#)
SUBJECT: GOA HAS REGAINED MOMENTUM ON TIP

REF: TIRANA 723

Classified By: DCM DEBORAH JONES FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

11. (SBU) Summary: In two recent meetings with Ministry of Interior (MOI) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) officials, the GOA seems to have regained its momentum on anti-trafficking efforts. Both ministries outlined new initiatives and ideas and the MOI provided a report demonstrating that the TIP database is now fully populated, a significant improvement over the situation described in reftel. A drawn out electoral campaign monopolized many months of 2009, but the GOA now seems to moving in the right direction with respect to TIP. End summary.

12. (SBU) During a 30 minute meeting with Minister of Interior Lulzim Basha and Deputy Minister of Interior and National Anti Trafficking Coordinator Iva Zajmi on December 8, Basha outlined several anti-trafficking initiatives currently underway by the GOA and other long term plans. The meeting, requested by the Ministry of Interior (MOI), was positive with Basha directly asking what the GOA needs to accomplish in TIP programs. In response to statements by DCM and PolOff, Basha made phone calls to assess the status of funding for NGO shelters and ordered Zajmi to carry out tasks to accomplish these goals. Among these tasks is having the MOI sit down with the Prosecutor General's (PG) Office later this month to explore ways for the MOI to assist the PG. Basha also suggested that the PG should appoint one prosecutor to "manage or oversee" all TIP cases, something that is not done currently and would be a very positive development if seen through. Harkening back to PM Sali Berisha's 2008 pledge that the GOA would provide financial assistance to NGO shelters, Basha dialed directly an official in the parliament to find out how much has been allocated for this purpose. While the initial answer was vague, Basha said that he will continue to push this matter as this is one of the PM's priorities. Zajmi chimed in at this point to say that direct GOA assistance to NGOs can be difficult to manage due to legal provisions.

13. (SBU) Basha also said the GOA will hold an interagency meeting on TIP on December 21 to review the GOA's priorities. Significantly, he also said his Ministry will begin to crack down on child begging by investigating and arresting parents of child beggars. According to Basha, trafficking children for begging seems to be increasing more than trafficking for prostitution and he indicated that internal trafficking is more prevalent than external. (Note/Comment: Many NGO observers also believe internal trafficking to be on the rise. End note/comment.) Also noteworthy is that, in contrast to reftel, data from 2009 TIP cases has finally been entered in the anti-trafficking database, "now that the Ministry of Labor has gone to work," as Basha put it.

14. (SBU) Not to be outdone by the Ministry of Interior, Ilir Melo, Chief of the Americas Desk at the MFA, told Poloff last

week that the GOA plans to host a regional Ministerial level conference on trafficking next March. Melo envisions an expert level discussion the first day and then a Ministerial gathering the second day in order to discuss a regional approach to the problem. He also said that he would like to see some sort of declaration come out of the conference as well and added that he believes such a declaration is possible. Finally, he asked if the USG would be willing to provide any assistance for the conference.

15. (C) Comment: The GOA seems to have regained much of the momentum it had up until the start of the electoral campaign in April/May. The electoral campaign and its long aftermath of appeals and government formation slowed down nearly every issue, but the new government is now working and moving forward on some issues. Deputy Minister of Interior Zajmi is also back at work, giving a much needed leadership boost to her office, which was rudderless for much of the summer and fall. While working level cooperation did continue throughout the electoral campaign, strategic policy and direction was lacking. We are heartened by Basha's pledges and he does have a very clear understanding of the importance of this issue from his time as Foreign Minister. The MFA's willingness to engage on this issue is also positive and represents a change from the past in which it rarely got involved in TIP activities. The GOA seems to be back on track, at least with respect to TIP.

WITHERS